

# **The Importance of Curriculum in Undergraduate Dance Programs**

## ***A Case Study on the Curricula of Selected University Level Dance Programs***

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Drexel University

by

Alexandra L. Rocha

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

of

Master of Science in Arts Administration

June 2016



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Jean Brody of the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design at Drexel University. Dr. Brody was always available to assist me whenever I had any questions or needed guidance. She helped me better develop my thoughts and provided insight and perspective that led me in the right direction.

I would also like to thank the individuals who took part in my research from the nine university level dance programs that will be discussed in this study. Thank you to Bettijane Sills of SUNY Purchase, Sean Curran of New York University, Patty Harrington Delaney of Southern Methodist University, Sherril Dodds of Temple University, Jan Erkert of the University of Illinois, Damon Rago of Loyola Marymount University, Richard Rose of the University of Florida, Marc Powers of the University of South Florida and Donna Faye Burchfield of University of the Arts. Without their passionate participation and input, my research could not have been successfully conducted.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Andrew Zitcer of the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design at Drexel University for helping me formulate and establish my thesis topic, and for providing me with valuable feedback to help make my thesis stronger.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents and boyfriend for providing me with unconditional support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and throughout the process of researching and writing my thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO- CATEGORY #1 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE- CATEGORY #2.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR- CATEGORY #3.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>43</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the curricula of nine university level dance programs, in addition to how the approach of each department plays a vital role in the education undergraduate dance students receive, specifically, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. It is important for undergraduate dance students to receive an education that exposes them to other possible career paths outside of dancing professionally. After conducting interviews with the nine university level dance programs, the findings were categorized into three groups; programs with a strict focus on creating performers, programs that make performing the primary goal, while also encouraging and exposing students to other options, and lastly, universities that believe the skills acquired through receiving an undergraduate dance education go beyond dancing, and become skills that are applicable to a multitude of professions. The importance of this study was to gauge the preparedness of undergraduate dance students for non-performance, dance related careers.

## INTRODUCTION

University level dance programs around the country cultivate the talent of young dancers who are striving for a career in the dance field. These programs hold the responsibility of properly training and adequately preparing their students to enter into the arts world upon the completion of the university's program. For most, success in a university dance program is measured on whether or not students make it to the professional performance level. What many B.F.A. dance programs around the country lack is a wider based curriculum. A broader curriculum in university level dance programs will provide students with the necessary exposure needed to seek a career direction, in dance, outside of performing with a professional ballet or modern company.

The courses that a student takes while in college can greatly impact their direction in which they take their career. For students studying dance, countless hours are spent in rigorous technique classes and rehearsals, while simultaneously preparing for a Choreography assignment. Choreography or Composition is a common course amongst most B.F.A. dance programs. Although these classes are necessary for a student seeking a degree in dance, other courses should be offered as a part of the programs' curriculum, which introduces them to fields outside of performing, while still pertaining to dance, such as arts administration, arts entrepreneurship, and physical therapy.

To better understand how university level dance programs prepare their students for careers in the dance field, I analyzed the curricula of nine dance programs in the United States to determine whether or not students are being prepared for a range of careers, beyond performance. Through a comprehensive review of the curricula and

through thorough discussions with faculty and staff of the universities, I was able to understand how and what is being taught besides movement based coursework. In addition to analyzing the curricula of programs that offer wider coursework, I also identified the curricula of programs that predominantly focus on movement based and technique based classes. Through this process, I was able to gauge how the curricula of university level dance programs can be used to more adequately prepare their students for job opportunities in the arts field outside of the performance realm.

My topic pertains to education at the undergraduate level and its vital relevance to the field of arts administration, in particular. If more university level dance students were exposed to coursework relating to arts administration, the field itself would grow in immense ways and become a much more dense and dynamic field in the arts world. The research done regarding this subject matter could be responsible for the revitalization of existing dance programs' curricula, and could be the stepping-stone for the establishment of new dance programs at universities across the country. My topic relates to the literature on undergraduate education, dance education and additionally, to the field of arts administration. Along with these elements, my topic pertains to other related fields that could derive from receiving a dance degree such as physical therapy and arts entrepreneurship, amongst others.

I conducted extensive qualitative interviews with faculty and staff from nine university level dance programs in the United States that offer a Bachelor of Fine Arts. While many programs also offer a more academic and theory based degree, a Bachelor of Arts, I chose to focus specifically on the B.F.A. to understand how a student, who is said

to participate more in the arts rather than academics, is prepared for varied career opportunities.

The use of qualitative interviews offered me insight on the curricula of each program and how faculty members feel their programs' coursework prepares their students for a multitude of differing careers in the dance field. In conducting these interviews, I investigated on how and why decisions are made regarding an institutions curricula. In hearing how and why certain decisions are made, I now better understand why universities offer their curricula as is.

Since I was unable to travel to the locations of the universities included in my research, all of my interviews were conducted over the phone, which ranged in length from 10 minutes to 30 minutes.

During this process, I studied the selected dance programs and analyzed what is being done to educate students for careers in the dance field, while simultaneously identifying what is not being done to educate students on the potential career paths available in the dance world. While this study was only limited to a few selected dance programs, the results determined serve as a tool for the growth and expansion of other programs, including the ones studied, in addition to the establishment of new dance programs at already existing universities.

My intention was to additionally incorporate a survey for the 2016 graduating B.F.A. students in the selected dance programs to gauge how prepared they believed they were to enter into a career outside of performing, in addition to how responsive they would be to a broader curriculum. This knowledge would have provided me with the perspective of current dance majors, and their feedback would have served as a



resourceful tool in discovering what dance majors really need and how prepared they feel they are for their futures. I was unable to survey students due to time constraints and the possibility that many students would not fill out the survey. I could not ask the faculty and staff from each university to mandate the survey, thus there was a high probability that I would not receive a large number of responses in a timely manner.

University level dance programs around the country serve as young dancers' platform in preparation for a career in the dance field. When students commit to receiving higher education in dance, i.e. a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) in Dance or a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Dance, the university commits to continue training the dancers in terms of their technique, in addition to academically readying them for their futures. Much responsibility is then placed onto these dance programs to adequately instruct and inform their students on what the dance field has to offer professionally. Many believe that success in a university level dance program is based on whether or not students make it to the professional performance level. Aside from performing, there are numerous different career paths related to the dance field that one could take, which equal success as well. University level dance programs have a predominant focus on movement-based coursework, such as technique and Choreography classes. While these courses provide students with necessary and vital knowledge, much of what the dance world has to offer is not included. What many university level dance programs lack is a wide based curriculum, which sheds light on other career tracks. A broader curriculum will provide students with the exposure needed to seek a career in dance, aside from performing with a professional dance company.

Universities across the country educating students hold the responsibility of providing their students with opportunities, strong coursework, as well as guidance and instruction on the many different facets of their chosen field of study. Juha Himanka, author of “University Curriculum- Recent Philosophical Reflections and Practical Implementations”, believes that most universities provide their students with “inadequate educations in both general subjects and subjects related to ones major”. Throughout the course of their education, graduates should obtain the necessary knowledge, tools, and wisdom to know what it is they are doing in their chosen field (Himanka 2013, 100-104). A program’s curriculum is essential in administering a well-rounded and well-exposed education, where the students gain new thoughts and perspectives. An institution’s curriculum is crucial for the well being of higher education, and the success of its students. Educational institutions should always strive to make sure that their education is preparing students coming through their universities with the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue a career in their field of study. Having a varied curriculum will benefit the students and in turn, the university’s reputation. In terms of having a varied curriculum in university level dance programs, these diverse tools will help dance students explore other dance career paths outside of performing, while providing them with the education to do so (Kahn and Smith 2015, 66-76).

Even though dance education is exponentially different from what it used to be, dance students need a more diverse education to prepare them for a wide variety of career options. Gayle Kassing states that dance now infiltrates our life as individuals, as well as a society, in many different ways. From academic settings to communities across the world, dance continues to provide knowledge, entertainment, and education to our

society. Necessary time must be spent in better utilizing our resources in order to formulate a stronger presence for dance education (Kassing 2010, 21-25, 32). By assessing the present state of dance education, we can prepare for a future where equal importance is placed on defining dance education as it is in defining other more academic structured programs. Curriculum is an integral part of achieving this, and it is extremely crucial for the curriculum in higher education dance programs to exceed beyond technique and choreography classes. Movement is perhaps the largest part of dance, however when looking beyond that, there are numerous other elements that can, and should be, incorporated in the curriculums of university level dance programs. There are ways in which dance curriculum helps student see beyond performing. Principles and standards must be developed for the establishment of better dance curricula in universities (LaPointe-Crump 2006, 3-4, 12). A dance curriculum should be a balance between movement and academics.

One of dance education's biggest challenges is to expand, for which students can then be better prepared for their futures. Dance education must be more accommodating to other facets of dance so that students can be better equipped to function effectively (Stock 2004, 61-66). Curricula must go beyond the dancing, and enter in to the cultural and creative industries of the dance world. Dance can be explored through different lenses, however if students in university level dance programs are only given one or two lenses to look through, they are not receiving the versatile education they need. A well-rounded arts education at the undergraduate level is vital. In addition to performing professionally, administration plays a large role in the dance world, while physical therapy plays a vital role in the health of dancers. Dance is interconnected with many

things in countless ways, and the education undergraduate students receive must be reflective of that.

Hundreds of colleges across the United States now offer dance majors, dance minors, and dance electives for students to take. During this twenty first century, dance became a separate discipline and continues to serve as a vital aspect in education (Bonbright 200, 31-32). According to Stuart Hodes, many believe that the effort and thought spent in creating a strong dance program or curriculum for an undergraduate dance program, for example, does not come near the effort and thought spent in establishing research universities (Hodes 1995, 2). What Hodes means by this is that more effort and time is spent in creating predominant research universities, versus the effort and time spent in creating predominant dance programs. By further developing undergraduate dance programs, the likelihood of more students continuing education in other fields, such as arts administration, is greater. This kind of development in undergraduate dance programs will ensure more interest in other fields such as arts administration, which will help this field, in particular, expand. Even with the establishment of liberal arts degrees (B.A. & B.S.), dance programs in higher education primarily focus on the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. In 2011, 64% of dance degrees awarded to students were liberal arts degrees, while only 33% fell under the professional degree (B.F.A.). Importance should be placed in all available degree options (B.A., B.S., B.F.A.) primarily because the students are all trying to build a successful career in the dance world through their education (Risner 2013, 56-60). There are different benefits and challenges that pertain to all three-degree options, however equal importance should be placed in reviewing curriculum and producing stronger programs all around. We must

pay attention to where we are now and assess what is critical for dance education's future in higher education. In revitalizing the B.F.A., this degree can serve numerous dance professions and will open up more career path options for students obtaining this degree (Risner 2013, 56-60). While students are often times encouraged to receive a graduate education upon the completion of a bachelor's degree, students in undergraduate dance programs should have the knowledge of subject matter in order to determine their own career path. While there have been expansive efforts made in the professionalization of the field in terms of programs such as the Bachelor of Fine Arts and even the Masters of Fine Arts (M.F.A.), by further establishing these programs, student will be allowed to study dance while also engaging students in skills and knowledge needed for their futures. Providing students with these tools will expand not only the arts administration field, but other dance career fields as well.

Many people believe that there are several risks that undergraduate students take when deciding to major in the arts while being in college. Even in good economic times, there are risks that students take when deciding to study dance, music, or theater because of a lack of performance based job opportunities (Farnbaugh et al, 2003, 5-19). I believe that undergraduate dance education has a stigma, which many believe only serves as a booster for a performance career. Many people I personally have come in contact with do not see the potential outcomes that could derive from obtaining a B.F.A. or a B.A., and perhaps neither do universities around this country. Unfortunately, this is due to a lack of wider based curricula that exposed undergraduate students to other dance related professions. When professional dancers reach the end of their performance career, for example, they face a difficult transition because their skills are primarily dance related.

Challenges are inevitable as they transition into a new occupation because of a lack in other skills (Ardrey, 2009). A stronger undergraduate dance education may have eased some of these challenges because they had received proper guidance and direction. Often times, undergraduate dance students complete their Bachelor's degree and move on to the performance field. However when their performance career has come to an end, because the career span for professional dancers is not very long, dancers struggle on what to do next because they lack vital knowledge and skills in order to make the next career decision. When dancers end their performance career, the economic, psychological, and educational difficulties of this career transition have a profound impact on their life presently, and in the future. Joan Jeffri and David Throsby conducted three surveys to discover such challenges. The findings showed that most dancers were always aware of the difficulties that lay ahead when it came time to transition out of performing, however this was not something that would have ever stopped them from a performance career. Most dancers also understood that a post-transition career would be better facilitated by further education (Jeffri and Throsby, 2006, 3-5). There are countless career opportunities available in the dance world, and education serves as the stepping-stone to achieving a successful career.

While further developing university level dance programs curriculums will better inform and expose dance students to different career paths through more broad coursework, universities must also advise and encourage their students on the importance of the continuation of higher education such as, graduate or professional education. Dance students who enter graduate school after the completion of their Bachelor's degree, may look into studying arts administration, or even physical therapy. Professional

dance companies require arts administrators to handle the administrative responsibilities of running, and maintaining, a dance company. Physical therapists are also on hand for the dancers when injuries arise. In addition to graduate school, dance students entering law school or medical school can also have careers related to the dance world. Dancers who attend law school can take the education they received and work as a lawyer for a professional dance company, large arts organization, and multi-faceted performing arts centers. Dance students attending medical school can strive to become orthopedic surgeons, which go hand in hand with physical therapists when dancers are injured. In an article titled “What Becomes of Undergraduate Dance Majors?”, Sarah S. Montgomery and Michael D. Robinson present critical information pertaining to life for dancers upon graduation. After deploying a survey, which reached graduates of five different college dance departments, Montgomery and Robinson’ findings showed that 85% of graduates were employed in professional companies at some point after graduation, but eventually needed to make a vital career transition. The continuation of education will create more opportunities for undergraduate dance students in terms of better employment (Montgomery and Robinson, 2003, 57).

Jan Van Dyke, author of “A Realistic Look at Graduating Dance Majors: Problems and Solutions”, personally admits to lacking vital tools that could have directed her in a clearer career path. She believes that undergraduate dance students should be exposed to the real world in a more serious manner, and states that before students graduate from a university level dance program, more preparation should be places in areas other than technique classes to better prepare students for a career outside of performing, or to further their education (Van Dyke 2010, 83-87).

In looking closely at, and assessing the issues in university level dance programs, we can revitalize existing programs to create better environments for dance students. In starting with a more wide based curriculum, students can receive a better-rounded education that delves into the different components that the dance field consists of. The coursework may open new doors and opportunities for a dance student's career path and sheds light on the importance of these careers. This kind of preparation and exposure furthers not only the students' well being in the future, but the future of the dance field as well. While introducing students to the different facets of the dance field is extremely vital, encouraging students to continue receiving education, to then work professionally in the dance field, through the revamped curriculum is equally as important. Pertaining to the dance field, undergraduate education helps young dancers see beyond the performance realm and allows them the chance to build a successful career in dance without being on stage.



## **CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS**

After conducting interviews with directors, chairmen and deans of nine university level dance programs in the country, it became evident that a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance (B.F.A.) is used as both a tool to prepare undergraduate students for a career in performing, and as the foundation for undergraduate students to branch out into other dance related fields. To some, a B.F.A. is strictly a performance degree, and so, those universities honor that by establishing a curriculum that prepares students for a career in performing, most commonly, or in choreographing. To others, a B.F.A. is a performance degree that not only prepares students for careers as performers, but exposes students to other disciplines within the dance field as well. To few, a B.F.A. is a performance degree that provides students with skills applicable to not only the dance field, but to other fields as well. While the degree itself holds the same meaning throughout every university, the curriculum, the program's focus, and the willingness to embrace the full potential of the B.F.A. differs from university to university. In my findings, I came across universities with a focus on creating performers, universities that make performing the primary goal, but simultaneously expose students to other options and lastly, universities who believe that the skills acquired through a B.F.A. go beyond dancing, and become skills applicable to a multitude of professions.

While there are numerous factors that distinguish each university level dance program from one another, there is an overall consistency amongst all the programs I conducted interviews with. No matter the level of importance placed on performance one of the goals, if not the only goal, is to prepare students for a career in performance. Most universities stated that many students enter into their program with the notion that

performing in a professional company upon completion of the program is their final objective. Conversely, students may discover other career options during their undergraduate education and shift their focus from performing to another area of the dance realm. This process of discovering new paths, or developing new aspirations, for students can occur because of many different reasons. A common reason is that students become interested in other dance related options due to exposure from their curriculum. Every university I conducted an interview with offered both required and elective coursework. Much of the coursework, both required and elective was highly consistent amongst the nine universities. Some reoccurring coursework consisted of Ballet, Modern and Jazz techniques, Composition or Choreography, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dance History, Kinesiology or Anatomy and a Senior exit course, such as a Capstone or Seminar. While much of the curriculum is similar, some of the most important differences that are dependent upon the university are the stance and approach taken towards the curriculum by the program itself. In a program where the B.F.A. is perceived as a tool that helps students develop applicable life skills, there may be more encouragement for students to delve into other dance related disciplines such as medicine, physical therapy, and law or arts administration. Each of those career paths stems from the coursework offered. The B.F.A. then becomes the foundation for one's career, as more layers can be added through further education and experience. What once was perceived as a performance degree has now become a degree applicable to one's life.

Another reason students begin expressing interests in other dance related fields during their undergraduate education is because they have a realization that a performance career is either not for them, or it is not a career they wish to endure.

Reaching the professional performance level is immensely difficult, and is often not a reality for many young dancers. According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of jobs for dancers and choreographers in 2014 totaled 20,100 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). With limited spots available in dance companies, and the competitiveness to achieve one of those spots, it is extremely challenging attain the goal. The Bureau of Labor Statistics claims:

“Employment of dancers and choreographers is projected to grow 5 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. A growing interest in dance and in pop culture may provide opportunities in dance schools and in fields outside of dance companies. However, dancers and choreographers face intense competition, and the number of applicants is expected to vastly exceed the number of job openings.”

Some students may also find the strength to accept that they are not strong candidates to attain professional performance careers. While both scenarios reach an ending different from dancing professionally, this does not mean that their undergraduate dance education becomes inferior or useless. When this realization or change in aspirations occurs for undergraduate dance students, they must be able to rely on the education they are receiving through their program. Whether they dance professionally or not, their B.F.A. will still serve great importance in their life. There is a stigma about undergraduate dance education regarding what one can achieve throughout their life with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. To most, a B.F.A. signifies four years of preparation to dance at the

professional level. Many individuals have difficulty looking beyond the obvious, and comprehending that there are multiple career options that can stem from receiving a B.F.A.

**The stigma: what can you do with a B.F.A., other than dance?**

Universities play a role in helping students make decisions regarding their futures. Through its programs' curriculum, the coursework offered serves as a students' compass. Specific courses can guide students towards delving into the many different professions that exist within the dance field, thus preparing undergraduate dance students to pursue a career outside of dancing professionally in a company. After conducting interviews with nine university level dance programs, I categorized my findings into three different categories. Programs with a strict focus on creating performers are classified as the first category (Category #1). The second category of universities consists of programs that make performing the primary goal, while simultaneously encouraging and exposing students to other options (Category #2). Lastly, the third category is comprised of universities with the belief that the skills acquired through receiving an undergraduate dance education go beyond dancing, and become skills that are applicable to a multitude of professions (Category #3). Two universities were placed in Category #1, four universities in Category #2, and finally, three universities in Category #3. Through my research, I was able to gain insight into not only the programs themselves, but also the coursework that is being offered to undergraduate dance students. Through analyzing the different programs and their curriculum, identifying similarities and differences among

programs and conducting in-depth interviews with the heads of these dance programs, I feel as if I have gathered cohesive, elaborate and decisive data to gauge if students are adequately prepared for dance related careers outside of performing through the undergraduate dance education they receive.

## CHAPTER TWO- CATEGORY #1

### **Universities with a focus on creating performers:**

- *State University of New York at Purchase (SUNY Purchase)*
- *New York University (NYU)*

The undergraduate B.F.A. programs at SUNY Purchase and New York University serve as premiere examples of dance programs that prepare their students for a career in performing. The success of their students in the performance field is undeniable, and the former SUNY Purchase and NYU students owe much of their success to the education, training and preparedness they received from their undergraduate institutions. Because the main emphasis of both dance programs is performing, both SUNY Purchase and NYU fall into Category #1. While much of the core curriculum is the same between both universities, each program has its own approach on how the program prepares its students to dance professionally.

In an interview I conducted with SUNY Purchase's Bettijane Sills, the 2014-2015 Interim Co-Director of the Conservatory of Dance, I learned about SUNY's undergraduate B.F.A. dance program and how the program readies students for their performance careers. The students at SUNY Purchase are required to take 90 credits in dance and dance related courses, and approximately 30 liberal arts credits. Some of the coursework consists of College Writing, Western Civilization, Math, Music, Dance Production, Composition, Ballet and Modern techniques and Anatomy For Dance, which specifically count as their science credit for their core requirement as an academic. Some of the elective coursework SUNY offers its students are Pointe, ballet and modern

partnering, the Gaga technique, which is a movement language that was developed by Ohad Naharin that stems from the “belief in the healing, dynamic and ever-changing power of movement” (Gagapeople.com), and a course called Text and Movement which integrates the use of speech with movement. Bettijane Sills describes SUNY Purchase as “a very busy, intense program” (Sills, 2015). When students enter the SUNY Purchase undergraduate B.F.A. dance program, they are given a ballet and modern combination to learn. Once both combinations are learned, each dancer is individually filmed executing both combinations. In their last year at SUNY, each dancer is required to execute the same combinations from their first year in the program. The faculty uses this as a tool to identify the specific things they need to work on and to look at if they have improved or not over the years. This serves as the programs’ assessment for each student individually. By assessing their students in this manner, it is evident that the program works rigorously to ensure each student has improved during their time at SUNY and is ready to dance professionally upon completion of the program. This assessment sheds light on a young dancer’s strengths and weaknesses, and allows for a student to identify this to better their craft. In addition to the assessment, meetings are held between faculty and student to discuss progress and long-term goals. These meetings are called juries. The juries are used to ascertain whether the faculty feels a student can successfully complete the program. Bettijane Sills discussed with me that students may be asked to leave program after their sophomore year if they feel that SUNY is not the right place for them, or if the faculty can sense that their dream of being a professional dancer is not going to happen for them.

“Our program emphasizes performing” as, stated by the 2014-2015 Interim Co-Director (Sills, 2015). When asked if students within the program express interest in other dance related fields, Bettijane Sills explained the mentality of the SUNY B.F.A. students. According to Sills, “while they are at Purchase, they are concentrating on becoming performers” (Sills, 2015). She explained to me that students typically do not come and express an interest in other fields such as medicine, for example, while they are working their way through the program, however it is possible that one may pursue that later in their life. The percentage of dancers in the program that approach faculty members expressing their desire to pursue different interests outside of performing is small. At SUNY, it is believed that while the students are in college, they need to focus on performing. The rigor and intensity of this program is perhaps a students’ strongest asset. Because the program provides their students with such a strong foundation, they are able to execute anything they want to do with very little trouble, in terms of dancing professionally. It is a highly professional program that strongly emphasizes performing and does so by adequately preparing their students for that kind of career. While SUNY predominately focuses on performing, Bettijane Sills does believe that the education students at SUNY Purchase receive “carries over into other aspects of live, if you have a focus, if you have a sense of discipline, it can carry over into the rest of your life and for the rest of your life” (Sills, 2015).

Sean Curran, chairman of the New York University dance program, describes the NYU dance department as a “conservatory within a university” (Curran, 2015). With a curriculum consisting of Dance History, Anatomy, Music, Technique classes, Composition, Improvisation and more, the NYU dance program keeps its students busy



and highly focused. During my interview with Sean Curran, we discussed the rigor of the NYU program and the aspects that separate the dance program from others throughout the country.

To attain a B.F.A. at NYU, students are required to complete three academic years and two summer sessions. This differs from almost all other universities, which require four academic years to achieve a B.F.A. Curran explained the reasoning behind this approach. “Dancers’ lives and careers are short enough as it is, so we want to get them out into the professional world as soon as possible”, Curran stated (Curran, 2015). The two summer sessions that NYU dance students are required to take part in consist of six weeks of dance, and no academic coursework. Throughout the six weeks, students take modern and ballet classes, in addition to working with different professional dance companies throughout the weeks. This allows NYU students to see firsthand what a professional dance environment is like, and gives them the opportunity to prepare for a career in this field. Sean Curran describes the three years and two summers approach as very tight, but the students manage to get through it. If a student wishes to take a French or Biology class, for example, they must meticulously try and fit the extra coursework into their already busy and filled schedule. At NYU, there are a number of students who minor in other fields however it becomes immensely difficult for students because the B.F.A. is a three-year program. If a student in the NYU dance program is pursuing a double major, they are required to come back for a fourth year in order to obtain that second degree.

In their third year and last year at NYU, all students are required to be in NYU’s Second Avenue Dance Company. SADC functions as a working professional dance

company (tisch.nyu.edu). Each year, different noteworthy choreographers are brought in to work with the NYU students. Whether the guest artists are setting existing work or creating new works, NYU students are engaged in the choreographic process and are provided with professional experiences to better prepare them for their futures (tisch.nyu.edu). Being a part of NYU's Second Avenue Dance Company serves as an exit strategy to get NYU students into the professional world. According to Curran, many students are not expressing interest in other dance related fields because almost all of the NYU dance students want to get into dance companies. It is possible that later into their futures students may develop an interest in other careers in the dance field, however while they are at NYU, the students are dedicated and committed to making their dream of dancing professionally a reality. When asked if the NYU dance program encourages students to consider career options outside of dancing in a company, Curran was extremely honest in his response; "no we don't" (Curran, 2015). During the NYU undergraduate audition process, each applicant is interviewed to gauge whether or not they are right for the NYU program. There are approximately one hundred B.F.A.'s in the dance program, and all students are required to be accepted into the university, as well as the dance program, which makes the NYU dance program highly competitive. The interview is used as a tool to gain a better understanding of what each applicant wants to do once they have completed college. This is important to the faculty at NYU because their goal is to create performers and choreographers.

Aside from stressing a performance career for their students, NYU also places a large importance in preparing their students to work as choreographers. Throughout their time at NYU, during every semester all students are required to take a choreography

class. Students are actively encouraged to produce and showcase their own work in NYU's Tisch Dance Works, the programs' student choreography show. Curran expressed how choreography classes make a more useful and interesting dancer to any choreographer they may work with. However, not including performing or choreographing, the scope of interests that NYU dance students express is rather narrow. Most students develop an interest in nutrition, yoga and teaching, while there was no mention of pursuing a career in medicine, physical therapy, business or law, all careers that can stem from obtaining a B.F.A. Sean Curran discussed with me that there is an arts administration course that takes place on Saturdays, however it is something most M.F.A. students and only some graduating seniors take part in, because it is optional. There is a Business of Dance course in the undergraduate curriculum, however the students do not show much of an interest in this kind of coursework.

Based on the interview I conducted with Chairman Sean Curran, one thing is evident about the NYU dance program: it is solely geared towards creating dancers. In my final question to Curran, I asked if he felt the NYU dance program prepared its students for career paths outside of dancing professionally in a company. His response is as follows, "not really, we are really focused on making world class, virtuosic, streamlined finished, amazing dancers" (Curran, 2015). Many NYU dancers have gone on to pursue magnificent dance careers in companies such as Ohad Naharin's Batsheva Dance Company and Kyle Abraham's Abraham.In.Motion. NYU has a recent graduate who is now dancing with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's second company, Ailey II.

With a lack of discussion and emphasis, minimal effort is placed in exposing students to other facets of the dance world in both the SUNY Purchase and New York University dance programs. Both programs solely focus on getting their students into the performance side of the dance world. There is little exploration into other career options that one can delve into after receiving a B.F.A.

### CHAPTER THREE- CATEGORY #2

**Universities that make performing the primary goal, but simultaneously expose students to other options:**

- *Southern Methodist University (SMU)*
- *Temple University (Temple)*
- *Loyola Marymount University (LMU)*
- *University of Illinois (UI)*

Each of the four universities that were placed into Category #2 provide their students with the necessary tools that prepare them for a performance career, while simultaneously placing emphasis and importance in exposing students to other possible career options that can stem from the education offered through a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. The universities in Category #2 have a keen understanding that the B.F.A. is firstly a performance degree. However, that same keen understanding acknowledges that the B.F.A. offers curriculum that can help students determine a career path, aside from dancing professionally, that still pertains to the dance world. Students are trained and adequately prepared to become performers, while concurrently being exposed and guided to explore the vast options that a B.F.A. can open the doors to.

With approximately 80 students in the Southern Methodist University dance program, equal importance is placed in the emphasis of technique classes and in the emphasis of theoretical studies coursework. Through a curriculum that offers both required and elective coursework, articulated learning outcomes are designed that

demonstrate to students what should be achieved throughout a course. SMU Dance Chairman Patty Harrington Delaney explained that the curriculum itself is created to have continuity throughout its classes.

Many of the B.F.A. dance students at SMU are double majors. Students in the program are reportedly studying Engineering, Business, and International Studies or are pursuing the Pre-medical track, while simultaneously working towards achieving their dance degree. While the double major route is a challenging and difficult path to take for undergraduate students, the SMU dance program is encouraging of this decision and promotes the discovery of a students' own path. Based on this, it is evident that students do show interest in other fields outside of dancing professionally, and the program is supportive of said interest. Patty Harrington Delaney states, there are "many avenues of success in the dance field, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to be in a company" (Delaney, 2015). While the chairman acknowledges that the B.F.A. is a performance degree, and as such, students are trained to be performers, much emphasis is placed in encouraging their students to take their own path.

The SMU dance program offers technique classes in Modern, Ballet and Jazz, and unlike many dance programs in the country, students are required to take all three of these classes. A strong grounding in classical techniques, such as Graham and Balanchine, gives students a strong basis and foundation. Guest artists are often brought in to work with the SMU dance students, and students receive the opportunity to have repertory set on them. This experience allows for a student to work with professional artists and receive firsthand knowledge on what the professional dance world is like. When asked if she saw value in adding a business course into the SMU dance curriculum,

Patty Harrington Delaney explained to me that while she does see the potential value in expanding the SMU dance coursework, much of the business side of the dance world is a part of the Capstone course at SMU. Throughout the Capstone course, students learn the “business of the business”, while learning how to plan and create a budget. Students are exposed to grant writing and receive knowledge on how to create and produce your own concert (Delaney, 2015). This course serves as a prime example of how B.F.A. dance students can be exposed to other facets of the dance world through coursework required in ones curriculum. In addition to the Capstone course, the SMU dance program encourages students to pursue a minor in Arts Entrepreneurship or a degree in Applied Physiology and Sports Medicine if a student is interested in physical therapy. Kinesiology, which is a required course in the B.F.A. curriculum, fulfills one of the requirements in the Applied Physiology and Sports Medicine degree program. The dance program at SMU works with other departments to determine which of their coursework can be applicable to other degree programs offered by the university. With just this alone, it is clear that the SMU dance program prepares students for a career outside of performing. Patty Harrington Delaney states; “Art is more than just what your body can do” (Delaney, 2015). Dance can be used to permeate every part of your life.

In concluding my interview with Southern Methodist University Chairman Patty Harrington Delaney, we discussed the importance of educated young dancers, as it pertains to the performance realm. She explained to me that today, choreographers do not like to hire dancers without a degree. Things are very different now than they were 20 years ago in the professional dance world. It is likely that a professional company may not hire a dancer, because of the dancer’s lack of education. Choreographers do not like

the idea of working with a dancer that does not have the intellectual curiosity that comes along with a liberal arts education. A B.F.A. promotes critical and creative thinking, thus creating an individual that can do just that, critically and creatively think, which can contribute to a choreographers creative process. As stated by Patty Harrington Delaney, “higher education in dance is valued by higher powers in the field” (Delaney, 2015).

Temple University is the second university to be placed in Category #2, based on my research. With roughly 123 credits in the B.F.A. curriculum, about 80-90% of coursework are movement based in the Temple University dance program. Much of the programs’ curriculum is required, with some elective coursework offered. While 80-90% of Temple’s curriculum is considered movement based, some coursework that fall into the non-movement based category are Dance History, Dance Cultures and Dance Sciences. In my interview with Sherril Dodds, chairman for the department of dance at Temple, she articulated to me the reality that many young dancers have to face once they have gone through and completed their B.F.A. at Temple University.

Dodds explained to me that there are quite a few students that have expressed interest in other fields over the years, and approximately 10-20% of students go on to pursue graduate studies upon their completion at Temple. Similar to the outlook at Southern Methodist University, there is a keen understanding that the B.F.A. is a performance degree, but also that measures can be taken to ensure students are receiving exposure to other options and are prepared for careers outside of performing. At Temple, the undergraduate B.F.A. program is very performance oriented, however with knowledge that there are very few company jobs available, the program prepares students



for careers in teaching, administration, dancing writing and dance advocacy; “We imagine them pursuing a range of careers”, as stated by department chair Sherril Dodds (Dodds, 2015). It is important to understand that while most students enter in an undergraduate dance program thinking they want to dance professionally in a company, the reality is that there are not those kinds of jobs, or enough of these jobs, available to match the number of graduating seniors each year. For Sherril Dodds, this is one of the main reasons why dancers at Temple University are prepared to enter into careers outside of dancing professionally. The program is committed to the idea of dance as a diverse practice, which is inclusive to the broad range of dance practices that students at Temple identify and study.

Sherril Dodds believes that the curriculum exposes students to other potential career paths, but does believe that more work could be done in preparing students for jobs in the arts administration world, for example. She discussed with me the challenges of adequately achieving this. Because the undergraduate B.F.A. program is a performance degree, it is something that has to continually be honored. This slight barrier inhibits further expansion of the curriculum, however Temple University does its part in encouraging and exposing students to the opportunities that are out there for students that have obtained a B.F.A. in dance. Sherril Dodds explains, “we try to create independent artists in a more broad sense, and not just dancing in a company” (Dodds, 2015).

At the University of Illinois, most of the curriculum is movement based. “It depends on how you think about movement”, department head Jan Erkert stated (Erkert, 2015). The philosophy of the dance program at UI is to blend movement into the theoretical coursework offered to its students. Erkert explained to me that movement is

integrated in what is typically considered non-movement based coursework, such as Dance History. 20% of the credits student at the University of Illinois take are theory based, dance studies courses such as learning about the choreographic process. Much of the curriculum is comprised of movement-based classes such as 7 technique courses a week, i.e. Ballet and Modern, and Choreography courses, combined with other dance academic coursework such as Pedagogy, Production and Senior and Freshmen Seminar.

Because the program encourages students to consider career options outside of dancing professionally in a company, Jan Erkert discussed the ways in which the University of Illinois dance program accomplishes this. This program has a strong focus on helping the students find themselves within the program. Through the integration of other fields with dance, students are exposed to other disciplines, which provides them with the vital tools needed to pursue different career paths within the dance world. Many of the students at UI do go into different fields from the program, and much of their preparation comes from their B.F.A. training.

Most students at the University of Illinois have a desire to perform, but according to Jan Erkert, a “B.F.A. can also open doors to a lot of different things, and those doors are located in our curriculum” (Erkert, 2105). This recognition serves as a students’ greatest benefit. With a highly supportive faculty and an immense amount of field preparation, B.F.A. students at the University of Illinois are prepared have careers as performers, directors of companies, physical therapists and dance critics. The B.F.A. is a professional performance based degree; therefore students receive substantial technical training, which prepares them to be at the professional level. But in addition to their technical training, the University of Illinois dance students are receiving guidance and

exposure through mentoring and a strong curriculum that integrates movement into non-movement based coursework.

Similar to the University of Illinois, Loyola Marymount University believes in integrating other fields within their B.F.A. program. Damon Rago, Co-chairman of the dance department, and the faculty at LMU are highly encouraging of career articulation. Students at LMU are required to take 8 semesters of Ballet and Modern, and 4 semesters of Jazz. In addition to this coursework, Kinesiology, Dance History, Social Studies and Choreography are also a part of the curriculum at LMU. However, much of the preparation students receive for their careers goes beyond the B.F.A. curriculum.

While LMU students are training at a professional level, there is “a lot of space for students to explore areas of dance and how it relates to other careers”, as stated by Damon Rago (Rago, 2015). More, and more students are expressing interest in continuing their education beyond their undergraduate years, as well as in other career paths. Rago explained that the students are allowed to explore different areas and discover the connection between those areas and the dance world. This concept automatically helps students become more marketable because of the integration with other areas of concentration. Because of this, many students in the LMU dance department pursue a second major while attaining their B.F.A., and often times their senior project is a reflection of the integration with different fields and dance. The percentage of students who graduate with their B.F.A. and begin their career as a performer is small, therefore “we have to prepare students for something additional to make them marketable” as stated by Damon Rago (Rago, 2015).

Southern Methodist University, Temple University, University of Illinois and Loyola Marymount University do their part in preparing their students for career paths outside of dancing professionally, while simultaneously working to prepare them for a career as a professional dancer. The universities placed in Category #2 view the B.F.A. through a broad scope, which allows for the integration of different areas with dance, mentoring to help students discover their path and necessary exposure via ones curriculum to serve as an exposure tool to other possible career options related to dance. What highly interests me regarding Category #2 is that each one of these 4 universities acknowledged and fully understood that the B.F.A. is a professional and performance based degree. However, this notion is not one that has stood in the way of exposing and preparing students to work towards executing something else, other than performing. SMU, Temple, UI and LMU all work to honor the performance based idea of the B.F.A., in addition to ensuring that their students receive an education that is applicable to ones life, and applicable to any career a student decides to pursue.

## CHAPTER FOUR- CATEGORY #3

**Universities with the belief that the skills acquired through receiving an undergraduate dance education go beyond dancing, and become skills that are applicable to a multitude of professions:**

- *University of Florida (UF)*
- *University of South Florida (USF)*
- *University of the Arts (UA)*

Based on the research I have conducted, the University of Florida, University of South Florida and University of the Arts fall into Category #3. This category suggests that the skills and knowledge acquired from a B.F.A. are applicable to ones life and ones career choice. Through integrating dance with other disciplines and the rigorous demands of the B.F.A., the students at UF, USF and UA are prepared to enter into a field of their choice, which I have discovered is not always dancing professionally. The B.F.A. is their foundation, and serves as their stepping stone to options related to dance, and not related to dance.

As a research 1 institution with all colleges located on one campus, the University of Florida serves as a strong platform from which B.F.A. students can form connections with dance and other disciplines. Universities are classified as R1 if they offer a full range of baccalaureate programs, are committed to graduate education through the doctorate, give high priority to research, award 50 or more doctoral degrees each year and receive approximately \$40 million of federal support annually (Carnegie Research 1 Universities, 2001). The UF B.F.A. dance curriculum consists of approximately 124

credit hours, about 60 of which fill general education requirements. Students are required to take movement based classes such as Modern, Ballet, West African and Composition. The University of Florida is the only program I studied that offers a course like West African Dance to its students. The curriculum offers students a broad base of non-movement based coursework consisting of Dance History, Laban Movement Analysis, Kinesiology, Teaching Methods, and other required courses such as Lighting Design, Costuming, Production and Dance Appreciation.

The University of Florida sets the bar high in terms of criteria that must be met in every course. The B.F.A. is a performance degree that is designed to equip the students to meet the needs of the profession once they graduate. At UF, the dancers are equipping themselves to enter into the job market in a variety of fields. With this being said, there are many students at UF that have either expressed interest in another field within the dance world, or have expressed an interest in continuing their education, which a number of students have gone on to pursue. Richard Rose, associate professor at the University of Florida, discussed with me the ways in which the university itself is a B.F.A. students' greatest asset. Rose explained, "When students come to UF, there are many options for them to pursue while they are here" (Rose, 2015). Whether a dance student decides to double major or minor in something else, the department is encouraging of these decisions and allow further exploration for their students. Many students lean towards physical therapy or express a desire to go into management, all while pursuing their B.F.A., and all disciplines that are applicable to the education they are receiving through their B.F.A. Richard Rose was able to provide me with examples of UF alumni that have gone on to have successful careers in the arts administration world. Currently, there are 3

graduates working in fundraising or special events with American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet and Miami City Ballet.

It is important for students to apply what they are learning through their dance education onto other areas of focus. This is an approach that the UF dance department enables into each of their students. Much emphasis is placed on instituting a creative approach to other disciplines, and forming those viable connections. The stance that the UF dance department takes regarding how a student approaches and connects other disciplines with dance prepares students “to be versatile and ready meet the demands of the dancer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. Richard Rose explained, “It is the well rounded students who succeed” (Rose, 2015). Because of this notion, the University of Florida is highly supportive, encouraging and open to students not only pursuing a career outside of performing, but in furthering their learning scope by building connections that support their futures’ during their undergraduate years.

While the B.F.A. still remains a performance-based degree, UF does fulfill the requirements to prepare them for the performing arts field, however students do receive cross training in other disciplines. Importance is placed on the curriculum at UF because the department understands that a student may fall in love with stage management because of one specific course they took. The University of Florida strongly focuses on the diversification of students’ training for their career goals.

At the University of South Florida, students want to feel that they are getting something out of every class they are taking. This is why the USF dance department investigates what is really necessary for their students through constant fine tuning of the curriculum, as explained by, Director of the School of Theatre and Dance, Marc Powers.

Over the years, USF has made multiple changes to its curriculum. Whether it is expand the number of credits for a single course or the incorporation of another course, USF is open to the concept of adapting the curriculum to best fit the needs of their students. An example of this is best described by the discovery of many USF dance students feeling that their music course was not impacting them or fulfilling any kind of vital need, based on the specific content and how this course was being taught. Because of this, the department is working on dropping this course and incorporating content that needs to be there for the students.

The USF dance department has instilled in its students a fine understanding of why curriculum is important to ones success. Students want to be engaged in their courses and wish to apply their B.F.A. education to other areas of their lives. Some movement-based courses offered to USF students include Modern, Ballet, Choreography, Improvisation and Variations, with non-movement based courses such as Dance History, Laban Movement Analysis, Kinesiology and Freshmen and Senior Seminar. Upon completing the B.F.A. program at the University of South Florida, a number of students go forth into pursuing more education, i.e. graduate school for dance, or something completely different. Marc Powers shared that this is more common amongst Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) students, but that there are students who are on the B.F.A. track that have gone on to continue their education. Typically, most B.F.A. students have a strong will and desire to dance professionally, and concurrently, there are many B.F.A. students going to law school and medical school.

To Marc Powers, when looking at different career trajectories, you are not required to have a specific major in order to pursue something for the rest of your life.



Powers states, “College is about expanding your ability to think critically and to communicate, and to do the research at a deeper level” (Powers, 2015). It is imperative for USF students to have a deep understanding in other subjects as it pertains to their lives. The department is highly encouraging of its students pursuing career paths outside of performing. The Senior Seminar course offered to graduating seniors in the department provides students with knowledge on multiple paths, and helps seniors determine their next step. As an alumnus of the University of South Florida, I can personally resonate with the value this course offers to students; for it is the reason I am currently working towards receiving a Master of Science in Arts Administration. In my Senior Seminar course, I was exposed to arts administration and was provided with vital tools to ensure I was prepared to further my education and enter into this field. The Senior Seminar course explored the different facets of arts administration and educated the graduating seniors on the importance of this field.

At USF, individual advising plays a large role in a students’ time in the department. Much time is spent between the dance academic advisor and student to discover what their true interests are. USF students receive opportunities to ask about other paths they have expressed interest in, while working closely with their advisor to incorporate coursework that will help students reach their goals. The faculty also plays a large role in this. Whether it is discussing classes one should take, or things to study as a minor, the students receive the utmost of guidance from the faculty. Because of the guidance and support from their academic advisor and department faculty, many dance students double major in areas such as bio-medical sciences and engineering.

The University of South Florida dance department prepares their students for both a performance career, and any career a student wishes to embark on. There is a large number of students who have gone on to pursue a performance career, however, there is much success for those USF alumni who chose not to dance professionally, and the knowledge they received from their education led to that. Marc Powers discussed with me his thoughts on how the skills a student requires through a B.F.A. is applicable to ones life in a multitude of ways. Powers claims:

“It’s not just that you know how to dance, it is that you know how to focus yourselves, you have a sense of discipline, you have means of assessing yourself honestly for where your strengths’ and weaknesses are and what you need to improve on” (Powers, 2015).

In addition to this, B.F.A. students are use to working with deadlines, and constantly work with a rigorous schedule. To Marc Powers and the rest of the USF dance department, these are the skills applicable to ones job and life. In the end, it is not about how many hours were spent in rehearsal or in technique class, but what you gained from those experiences. The B.F.A. is a physically and mentally demanding degree that prepares students for any job they wish to enter. Marc Powers states, “studying dance prepares you for other things in life” (Powers, 2015).

Donna Faye Burchfield, director of the School of Dance at University of the Arts, was hired by the president of the university to create a more generative curriculum that opened the door for students to think beyond just dance. With over 300 undergraduate

students, it is inevitable that students express interests in other fields. The University of the Arts' B.F.A. curriculum prepares students for other career paths outside of dancing professionally, while encouraging interdisciplinary thinking.

One facet of the university's mission is to encourage students, as explained by Donna Faye Burchfield. In the UA dance department, their goal is "to create artists who are citizens of the world, who think across disciplines and who see arts in relationship to the world, not outside of that", Burchfield stated (Burchfield, 2015). With the encouragement of the department, UA students go on to pursue professional degrees and learn to think across disciplines and discover new ways of problem solving. University of the Arts is also the only university that I conducted research with that encouraged their B.F.A. students to seek arts administration internships during the summer. This alone suggests that importance is placed in exposing students to the arts administration field, and that there is value in receiving a B.F.A., as it is applicable to this field.

All students in the college of the arts at UA are required to take an arts entrepreneur course where they learn about the differences between non-profit and for profit organizations, learn how to seek insurance and about reading contracts. Donna Faye Burchfield explained to me that majoring in the arts, and more specifically majoring in dance, should not create a singular path. "Dance is a way of syncing, and a way of being in the world" (Burchfield, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

It is important to note that while similar characteristics are common amongst a number of university level dance programs in the country, there are distinct differences amongst programs that can directly impact a student's future. While curricula plays an integral role in the education students receive, perhaps the larger role is the outlook the department/program, and its faculty, has towards what a B.F.A. entails, and what kinds of doors the degree can open for students. A common denominator throughout each interview I conducted was hearing the interviewees state that the B.F.A. is a performance degree, and as such, should be honored. The consistency regarding this notion was evidently made clear through the training and the professional preparedness students receive in each university program. However, there is another layer that, I believe, should be added on top of this foundation to enhance the B.F.A. A program must expose students to other facets of the dance world, i.e. physical therapy, administration, law or medicine, for example, in conjunction with their technical and performance-focused training. This is where great importance is placed in a program's curricula. A B.F.A. student must receive the exposure and tools that delve into the dance realm outside of dancing professionally via the coursework offered. In addition to the curricula, a department's outlook and approach to dance, in general, and what it means to attain a B.F.A. can affect, or perhaps enhance, the decisions one makes after having received a B.F.A. in dance. The department's mindset is a large factor in ultimately determining how an undergraduate dance program will be structured. Some programs provide students with a structure that highly encourages them to explore other career, or educational, options and seek innovative ways to collaborate with other disciplines, while other

programs have a less encouraging mindset. These structural differences are what separate certain undergraduate dance programs from others. It becomes not only about the curricula, but also about how each program is structured, and how it will better benefit a student's B.F.A. education, or rather, how it will hinder their education.

Based on the research and data I have collected, I believe that all programs studied adequately prepare their students for a career as a professional dancer. However, based on the quality and rigor of the programs placed in Category #1, I can attest that the students from State University of New York at Purchase and New York University are at a higher advantage to reach a performance career because of their training and emphasis of their programs, and as such, are more prepared for a performance career over the universities placed in Category #2 and Category #3. SUNY Purchase and NYU are top-notch dance programs. With a strong emphasis in creating performers, the success of their students in the performance field is undeniable. However, it is my belief that the students at NYU and SUNY Purchase are not as prepared as they could be for a career outside of performing that is still related to the dance world.

In looking at Category #2, there is a solid combination of substantial dance training and diverse coursework that exposes students to other possible career paths. Southern Methodist University, Temple University, Loyola Marymount University and University of Illinois honor the B.F.A. through a number of movement-based coursework, through performance opportunities and through the encouragement of collaboration with other disciplines. The students in these programs receive the technical training required to pursue a performance career, while simultaneously gaining the insight and knowledge needed for other career options. Many of the programs believe in

finding a balance between both the technical aspect of dance and the educational exposure students need to create a versatile and well-rounded graduate. In my findings, I believe that the universities in Category #2 prepare their students for both a career in performing, and for a number of careers pertaining to the dance world, based on the programs' approach to the B.F.A. and the coursework offered to students.

What separates Category #3 from Category #1 and Category #2 is the distinction in how the universities approach what exactly makes a B.F.A. dance student prepared for the professional world in a career of their choice. While the programs provide their students with the technical training and varied coursework that make for a versatile and well-rounded graduate that is prepared for a variety of career, including performing, there is another element the University of South Florida, University of Florida and University of the Arts implement into their programs. The implemented element is the belief that the rigor, structure and intensity of their programs are what serve as a students' greatest asset throughout their lives. With such demanding programs, students are gaining important life skills such as time management, organization, discipline and the courage to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and overcome those weaknesses. Undergraduate dancers are exposed to working with small time frames in high intensity environments, i.e. the rehearsal process in preparation for a performance, while juggling their other studies. These characteristics are applicable to not only the dance field, but other fields as well. Students are prepared mentally, as well as physically, for any direction they decide to take their lives. With this, I am confident in stating my belief that the students in Category #3 are the most prepared to enter into a career outside of dancing professionally in a company.

It is important for all undergraduate dance students to receive guidance and knowledge regarding potential career opportunities within the dance world. The B.F.A. is a performance degree that goes beyond only performing. Regardless of students' goals, the curriculum within the B.F.A. and the approach/stance a program takes should still expose students and encourage the exploration and the furthering of knowledge in other dance related fields. Based on the interviews I conducted with nine university level dance programs, I have come to the conclusion that the programs' stance, approach and beliefs towards either performing or towards other careers in the dance world weighs more heavily on the exposure to other career options students will receive, or not receive, over the actual curriculum that is offered to students. Coursework is a vital part of an undergraduate dance student's education, however through my research, I firmly believe that the overall outlook that each program, as a whole, has towards performing professionally or towards other dance related career options directly relates to, and impacts, the success of their students in their chosen profession. If a program believes and emphasizes to their students that the only logical step after receiving a B.F.A. is to dance professionally, the students will place more importance in a performance career over another career in the dance field. Conversely, if a program believes and emphasizes to their students that the B.F.A. is a performance degree that can also open other doors within the dance world, students will place importance in discovering which path is right for them. Ultimately, the program and the faculty in that program are large determining factors in the kinds of careers B.F.A. students decide to enter into after the completion of their undergraduate program.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ardrey, Janelle M. "Dance Challenge: A Study of Individual College Educated Dancers and the Challenges They Face in the Dance Industry.," 2009.  
[https://idea.library.drexel.edu/islandora/object/idea%3A4335/datastream/OBJ/download/Dance\\_Challenge\\_\\_A\\_study\\_of\\_individual\\_college\\_educated\\_dancers\\_and\\_the\\_challenges\\_they\\_face\\_in\\_the\\_dance\\_industry.pdf](https://idea.library.drexel.edu/islandora/object/idea%3A4335/datastream/OBJ/download/Dance_Challenge__A_study_of_individual_college_educated_dancers_and_the_challenges_they_face_in_the_dance_industry.pdf).
- Bonbright, Jane M. "Dance: The Discipline." *Arts Education Policy Review* 102, no. 2 (December 2000): 31–32.
- Burchfield, Donne Faye. University of the Arts. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Carnegie Research 1 Universities." *Carnegie Research 1 Universities*. N.p., 31 Aug. 2001. Web. Mar. 2016.
- Curran, Sean. New York University. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- "Dancers and Choreographers : Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics." Accessed January 28, 2016. <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/entertainment-and-sports/dancers-and-choreographers.htm>.
- Delaney, Patty Harrington. Southern Methodist University. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Dodds, Sherril. Temple University. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Erkert, Jan. University of Illinois. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Gaga. *Gaga*. N.p., n.d. Web. October 2015.
- Himanka, Juha. "University Curriculum-Recent Philosophical Reflections and Practical Implementations." *Creative Education* 4, no. 12B special issue (December 2013): 100–104.
- Hodes, Stuart. "Dance and Essence: Reflections on Morality and Education." *Arts Education Policy Review* 97, no. 2 (November 1995): 2.
- Jeffri, Joan, and David Throsby. "Life after Dance: Career Transition of Professional Dancers." *International Journal of Arts Management* 8, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 54–63,80.
- Kassing, Gayle. "New Challenges in 21st-Century Dance Education." *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 81, no. 6 (August 2010): 21–25,32.



- Khan, Mohammad Ayub, and Laurie Smith Law. "An Integrative Approach to Curriculum Development in Higher Education in the USA: A Theoretical Framework." *International Education Studies* 8, no. 3 (March 2015): 66–76.
- LaPointe-Crump, Janice. "Dance Movement and Spirit: Issues in the Dance Education Curriculum." *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 77, no. 5 (June 2006): 3–4, 12.
- Luftig, Richard L., Melissa J. Donovan, Christy L. Farnbaugh, Eileen E. Kennedy, Therese Filicko, and Margaret J. Wyszomirski. "So What Are You Doing after College? An Investigation of Individuals Studying the Arts at the Post-Secondary Level, Their Job Aspirations and Levels of Realism." *Studies in Art Education* 45, no. 1 (October 1, 2003): 5–19.
- Montgomery, Sarah S., and Michael D. Robinson. "What Becomes of Undergraduate Dance Majors?" *Journal of Cultural Economics* 27, no. 1 (February 2003): 57.
- Powers, Marc. University of South Florida. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Rago, Damon. Loyola Marymount University. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Risner, Doug. "Current Challenges for K-12 Dance Education and Development: Perspectives from Higher Education." *Arts Education Policy Review* 108, no. 4 (April 2007): 17–23.
- Risner, Doug. "Curriculum Revision in Practice: Designing a Liberal Arts Degree in Dance Professions." *Journal of Dance Education* 13, no. 2 (2013): 56–60.
- Risner, Doug. "Dance Education Matters: Rebuilding Postsecondary Dance Education for Twenty-First Century Relevance and Resonance." *Arts Education Policy Review* 111, no. 4 (2010): 123–35.
- Rose, Richard. University of Florida. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Sills, Bettijane. SUNY Purchase. Phone interview by author, August 2015. Author's archive.
- Stock, Cheryl F. "Training the Thinking Dancer: Creating Careers in Dance in the 21st Century." In *Dance; Creative Industries Faculty*, 61–66. Beijing: Beijing Dance Academy, 2004. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/5731/>.
- Van Dyke, Jan. 2010: A Realistic Look at Graduating Dance Majors: Problems and Solutions, *Journal of Dance Education*, volume 10/ number 3, pp 83-87.
- Visiting Students. *Second Avenue Dance Company*. N.p., n.d. Web. October 2015.

Williamson, Amanda, and Jill Hayes. "Dancing the Sacred in Secular Higher Education Contexts." *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities* 1, no. 1 (January 2014): 11–20.